
Transportation Committee

HB 2587

Brief Description: Authorizing a sticker showing medical exemption from safety belt requirements.

Sponsors: Representatives Wood, Nixon, Lovick, Campbell, Hankins, Hatfield, Moeller, Rockefeller and Kagi.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Authorizes a safety belt exemption sticker to be displayed in a vehicle carrying a person who is unable to wear a safety belt for medical or physical reasons.

Hearing Date: 2/2/04

Staff: Page Scott (786-7301).

Background:

In 1986, Washington enacted a secondary safety belt law which allowed a traffic infraction to be issued for failing to wear a safety belt only after a vehicle was stopped for another suspected traffic violation. In 2002, Washington law was changed to make failure to wear a safety belt a primary traffic offense.

Motor vehicle operators or passengers who possess written verification from a licensed physician that they are unable to wear a safety belt for medical or physical reasons have been exempted from both the primary and secondary safety belt laws.

Approximately 0.3 percent of people stopped for safety belt violations are exempt from wearing a safety belt for medical reasons.

Summary of Bill:

A person who is unable to wear a safety belt for physical or medical reasons may apply to the Department of Licensing (DOL) for a safety belt exemption sticker to be displayed in a vehicle they occupy. The sticker will inform law enforcement that a vehicle occupant is exempt from wearing a seat belt. The Chief of the Washington State Patrol will adopt rules regarding placement of the sticker on the vehicle.

In order to obtain the safety belt exemption sticker from the DOL, the applicant must have a signed statement from a licensed physician stating the reasons why the use of a safety belt would be impractical or harmful to the person.

The DOL is permitted to charge a fee of no more than \$5 to cover the cost of the sticker. The sticker is valid for six months and may be renewed once for an additional consecutive six months.

Providing false information on the application for a safety belt exemption sticker is a gross misdemeanor.

Unauthorized use of a safety belt medical exemption sticker is a traffic infraction with a \$200 penalty.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not requested.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.